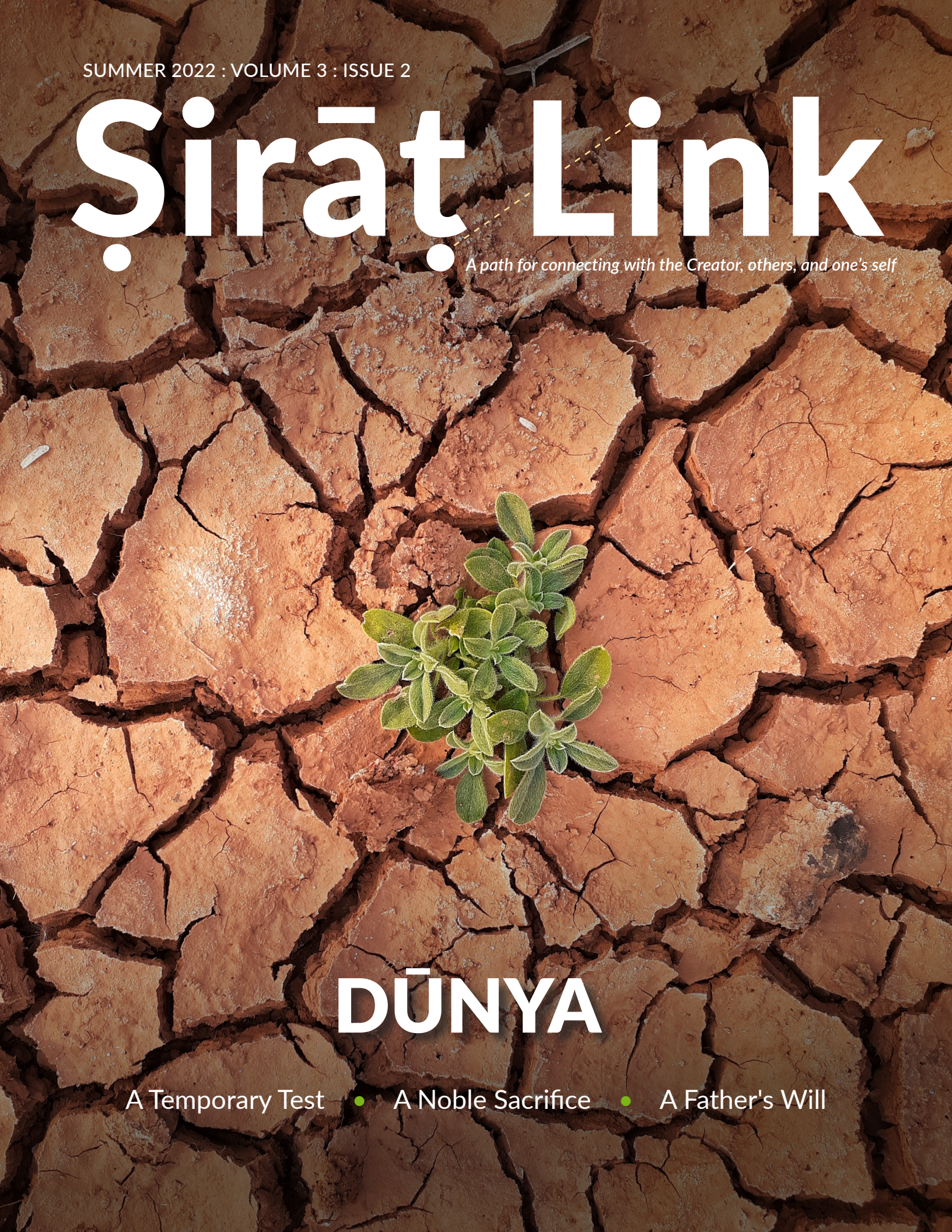
SUMMER 2022 : VOLUME 3 : ISSUE 2

Ṣirāṭ Link

A path for connecting with the Creator, others, and one's self



DŪNYA

A Temporary Test • A Noble Sacrifice • A Father's Will

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
May Allah's blessings be upon Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and his immaculate family
Peace and blessings be upon Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), Imām ʿAlī as-Sajjād (ʿa), the son of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), the children of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), and the companions of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa)

بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحِيم
اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ عَجِّل فَرَجَهُم
السَّلَامُ عَلَى الحُسَين وَ عَلَى عَلِيّ بن الحُسَين وَعَلَى اَولَادِ
الحُسَين وَ عَلَى اَصحَابِ الحُسَين

Letter from MOULANA ABIDI

Salāmun ʿAlaykum,

May Allah bless us, our families, and our communities.
I extend my sincerest condolences to the Imām of our time, Imām al-Māhdī (ʿaj), our great marājiʿ and scholars, and the Muslim Ummah on the upcoming commemoration of Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) martyrdom.

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Indeed, I have turned my face towards He who originated the heavens and the earth, as a ḥanīf (one who is upright), and I am not amongst the polytheists.
(Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Anʿām (6), Verse 79)

Dear brothers and sisters, the lessons we can learn from Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) are many but it is good for us to focus each year on one of these lessons and this can be a ladder of growth and success for us inshāʾAllah. Therefore the theme for this Muḥarram is *taslīm* (submission) and *iṭāʿah* (obedience). InshāʾAllah by reflecting on these two concepts, we can use the next two months to get closer to Allah through Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) submission and obedience to Him: as he faced each challenge in Karbalāʾ, his submission and obedience to Allah grew stronger.

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Ṣirāṭ Link
A 2nd Chance Books Publication

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

For the love of Him, they feed the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner.
(Noble Qurʾān 76:8)

2nd Chance Books is a non-profit organization that was founded in order to assist incarcerated Muslims by providing them with educational materials, tools for rehabilitation, and a support system. By responding to their numerous questions about Islam, they gain a more thorough understanding of the religion. So far, 2nd Chance has distributed over 20,000 books to inmates across the country.

Among 2nd Chance's most recent initiatives is Ṣirāṭ Link, a quarterly magazine. The title Ṣirāṭ Link, inspired by the Arabic term Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm which means the right path, presents this magazine as a means of guidance to a better connection to Allah, as well as offering the opportunity for connections with the broader community, and the improvement of one's self. InshāʾAllāh it can also serve as an opportunity for growing one's faith through education.

This magazine will be under the guidance and oversight of Moulana Nabi Raza Mir Abidi, Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Center, and several other scholars and experts.

***Taslīm* (Submission)**

Taslīm, or submission, is defined as the belief and action of yielding to a superior force. Upon reflection, here is how we can examine submission in Islam:

- Who and what are we submitting to?
  We are submitting to Allah and His riḍā (contentment and pleasure)
- What are we submitting?
  We are submitting our desires
- Why are we submitting?
  We are submitting because He is the All-Mighty Allah, who is my Lord and Nurturer. He is the All-Knowledgeable, who knows what is best for me and can fulfill my every need. He is the All-Powerful, who has the ability to protect me. He is the All-Merciful, who loves me and, therefore, will do everything to make me successful in this world and the next and protect me from every evil. Therefore, who better to submit to than al-Ḥakīm, the All-Wise?

Submitting wholeheartedly will plant and strengthen the seed of obedience in our hearts. At a basic level, obedience is simply performing our wājibāt (mandatory responsibilities) and refraining from the muḥarramāt (forbidden acts). On the second level, obedience is giving priority to Allah's instructions. For example, we put our ṣalāh time, our periodic check-ins with Allah, on the top of our to-do lists. Obedience is living a Godly life, where we have *ḥusn aẓ-ẓan* (a positive outlook) of Allah. On a deeper level, true obedience is accepting anything Allah chooses for me with happiness, trust, and complete submission. This true obedience and submission is demonstrated through Imām Ḥusayn's (ʿa) final sacrifice of his infant son, ʿAlī al-Asghar, when he said:

رِضًا بِقَضَائِهِ وَ تَسلِيمًالِاَمرِهِ

I am pleased with Allah's plan and submit to His will

If we are able to adapt the following ideologies, this will strengthen our obedience and submission to Allah:

- Remind ourselves and realize that He knows best even when we don't understand something initially.
- Keep the bigger picture of the purpose of life in our minds and trust Him even when circumstances in our lives take an unexpected turn.
- When we strive and pray for something, trust Him. After all, He knows our needs best.

Strengthening Submission and Obedience: A To-Do List for This Muḥarram

- Charge our spiritual fuel: Use these two months to strengthen our love and connection to Allah and the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). After all, love ignites the engine of movement and action.
- Increase our knowledge: In the next two months, we will receive a lot of great information. Knowledge is the baseline and foundation for submission and obedience.
- Stock up on maʿrifah (deeper understanding): Knowledge by itself is not beneficial. In order to benefit from the intrinsic value of knowledge, one must reflect and contemplate on this knowledge. We can spend some time in these next two months pondering on what we learn.
- Practice with actions: Take our strengthened love and understanding and start applying it to our actions. Focus on improving those areas you have struggled with, and remember that Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) is here to help us.
- Obedience with our soul and heart: Practice shifting our paradigm of Allah to one of trust and love. Rely on Him fully and remember He is on our side. This will help us in our mission to obey His commands.

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SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR SHAWWĀL

1st	Eid ul-Fiṭr	*May 2nd, 2022
25th	Death anniversary of Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa)	*May 26th, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR DHUL QAʿDAH

11th	Birth anniversary of Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā (ʿa)	*June 11th, 2022
29th	Death anniversary of Imām Muḥammad at-Taqī al-Jawād (ʿa)	*June 29th, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR DHUL ḤIJJAH

9th	Day of ʿArafah	*July 8th, 2022
10th	Eid ul-ʿAḍḥa	*July 9th, 2022
15th	Birth anniversary of Imām ʿAli an-Naqi al-Hādī (ʿa)	*July 14th, 2022
18th	Eid ul-Ghadīr	*July 17th, 2022
20th	Birth anniversary of Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa)	*July 19th, 2022
24th	Eid ul-Mubāhalah	*July 23rd, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR MUḤARRAM

2nd	Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and caravan arrive in Karbalā'	*July 31st, 2022
9th	Eve of ʿĀshūrāʾ- Tāsūʿāʾ	*August 7th, 2022
10th	Day of ʿĀshūrāʾ: death anniversary of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), male family members, and companions	*August 8th, 2022
25th	Death anniversary of Imām ʿAlī as-Sajjād (ʿa)	*August 23rd, 2022

*Please note the above Gregorian dates are only estimates. The dates are subject to change based on moon sighting, upon which the Islamic calendar is based.

Let us maximize our potential during these months by completing our to-do list and applying these actions in our lives. When we recite Ziyārat ʿĀshūrāʾ, let not the words "*Allahumajʿal maḥyāyā maḥyā Muḥammad wa ālī Muḥammad*" (O Allah, let me live the life of Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad) linger solely on our tongues. Let us actualize these words through our actions. Let us not simply ask Allah to grant us *Maqām al-Maḥmūd* — the highest and most praiseworthy status — but let us strive towards earning this prestigious rank through our righteous deeds. Let us emulate the companions of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) by striving towards righteousness and higher levels of taqwā (God-consciousness).

Brothers and sisters, these two months we are being gifted with *khazāin al-ilāhī* — Godly treasures. So, let us invest these treasures, and not let them go to waste. This is the best time to reflect and act. Let our actions be purposeful. Let each majlis[1] we attend, each vow we give, each beat of mātam[2], each trip to the masjid, each step in a julūs[3]demonstrate that we are the flag bearers of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa). Let us become his true ambassadors during these months and fly high the flag of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and Ḥaḍrat ʿAbbās on behalf of Imām al-Mahdī (aj). We must use these two months as an opportunity to improve ourselves and become true servants of our Lord. On these nights, let us have fruitful discussions where we reflect upon and discuss what we have learned from the lectures and majālis. Let us watch proudly as our children tread the path of al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) and embrace the Ḥusaynī culture. When we go home and see the manifestation of our beautiful investment after these two months, we will see how our manners and ethics have changed, our vision has broadened, and we have become good citizens and global thinkers.

Let this global vision allow us to remember and sincerely pray for all those who are being oppressed around the world, especially our Muslim brothers and sisters who are being oppressed in Kashmir, Yemen, Burma, Syria, Palestine, Bahrain, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, here, and everywhere else in the world!

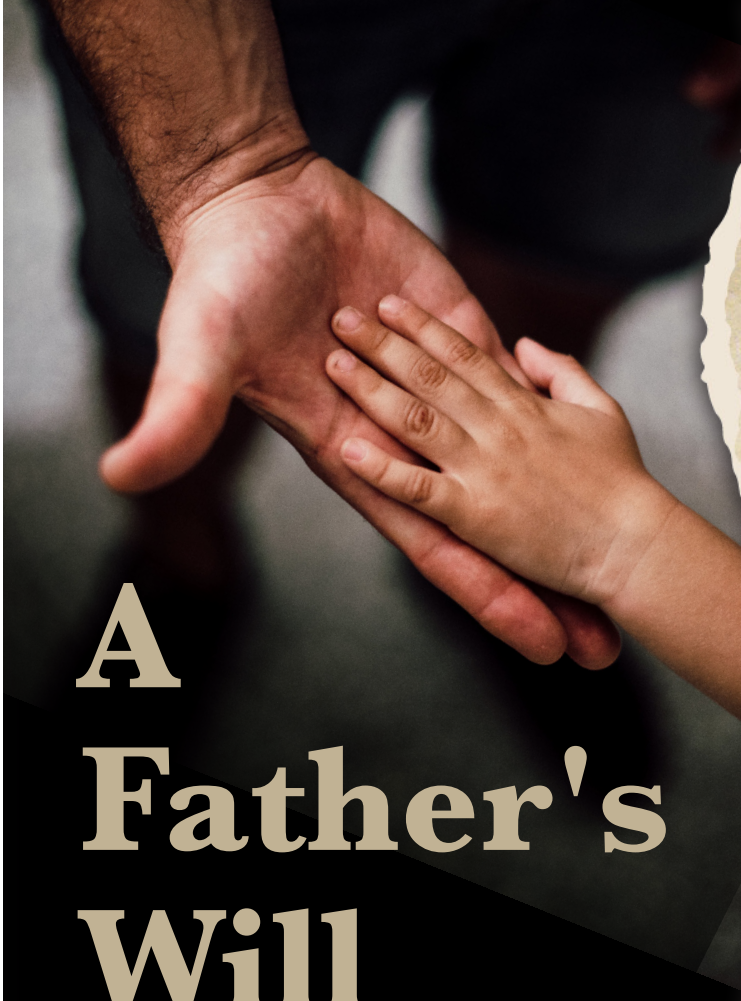
We pray that Allah gives us the tawfīq (Divine providence) to actualize our duties and responsibilities. Brothers and sisters let us and our families be insured with the best of insurances, the love and guidance of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa).

With Duʿās
Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)
Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

1Majlis refers to a religious gathering

2Mātam refers to beating of the chest during mourning or lamentation

3Julūs refers to religious procession



A Father's Will

After returning from the Battle of Ṣiffīn, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) gave certain pieces of advice to one of his sons. Some historians consider him to be Imām Ḥasan (ʿa) while others are of the opinion that he was Muḥammad al-Ḥanafiyyah.

He wrote the letter in the form of a will. His advice deals with almost every aspect of life which goes a long way to making a person successful in life - brave, humane, generous, virtuous and pious. This letter was written nearly 1400 years ago and is applicable and appropriate even today.

The full letter can be found at https://www.al-islam.org/articles/letter-father-son-last-will-ali-ibn-abi-talib

My dear son! You are part of my body and soul and whenever I look at you I feel as if I am looking at myself. If any calamities befall you, I feel as if they have befallen me. Your death will make me feel as if it were my own death. Your affairs are to me like my own affairs.

Therefore, I have committed these pieces of advice to paper. I want you to take care of them, to pay attention to them and to guard them well. I may remain longer in your life or I may not, but I want these pieces of advice to remain with you always.

My first and foremost advice to you, my son, is to fear Allah. Be His obedient servant. Keep the thought of Him always fresh in your mind. Be attached to and carefully guard the principles of Islam which connect you with Him. Can any other connection be stronger, more durable and more lasting than this to command greater respect and consideration or to replace it?

Accept good exhortations and refresh your mind with them. Adopt piety and kill your inordinate desires with its help. Build your character with the help of true faith in religion and Allah. Subjugate your nature with the vision of death, make it see the mortality of life and of all that it holds dear, force it to realize the actuality of misfortunes and adversities, the changes of circumstances and times, and compel it to study the lives of past people.

Persuade your mind to see the ruined cities, the dilapidated palaces, decaying signs and relics of fallen empires of past nations. Then meditate over the activities of those people, what they had done when they were alive and were in power, what they had achieved, from where they had started their careers; where, when and how they were brought to an end, where they are now; what they actually had gained out of life and what their contributions were to human welfare.

If you carefully ponder over these problems, you will find that each one of those people parted company with others and with all that they cherished and loved, and now they are in a solitary abode, alone and unattended; you also will be like them. Take care to provide well for your future abode. Do not barter away eternal blessing for pleasures of this mortal and fleeting world.

Develop the habit of patience against sufferings, calamities and adversities. This virtue of patience is one of the highest values of morality and nobility of character and it is the best habit which one can develop. Trust in Allah and let your mind seek His protection in every calamity and suffering because you will thus entrust yourself and your affairs to the Best Trustee and to the Mightiest Guardian.

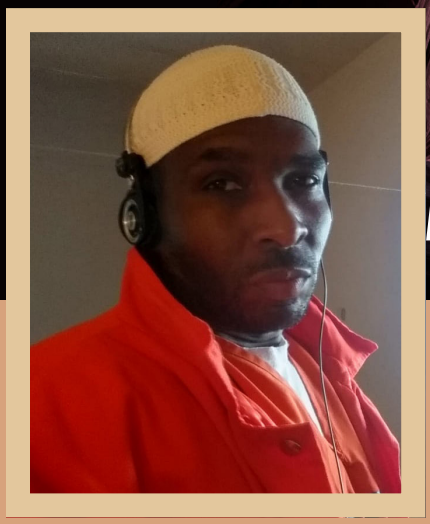
Do not seek help or protection from anybody but Allah. Reserve your prayers, your requests, your solicitations, your supplications, and your entreaties to Him and Him alone, because to grant, to give, to confer and to bestow, as well as to withhold, to deprive, to refuse, and to debar, lies only in His Power. Ask as much of His Blessings and seek as much of His Guidance as you can.

If you go back upon your promises, if you break your vows, or start doing things that you regret, He will not immediately punish you nor does He refuse His Blessings in haste and if you repent He neither taunts you nor betrays you though you may fully deserve both, but He accepts your penitence and pardons you. He never begrudges His Forgiveness nor refuses His Mercy, on the contrary He has decreed repentance as a virtue and a pious deed.

The Merciful Lord has ordered that every evil deed of yours will be counted as one and a good deed and pious action will be rewarded tenfold. He has left the door of repentance open. He hears you whenever you call Him. He accepts your prayer whenever you pray to Him. Invoke Him to grant you your heart's desire, lay before Him the secrets of your heart, tell Him about all the calamities that have befallen you and misfortunes which face you, and beseech His help to overcome them. You may invoke His Help and Support in difficulties and distresses.

My dear son! After having given these pieces of advice to you, I entrust you to the Lord. He will help, guide and protect you in this world and the Hereafter. I beseech Him to take you under His protection in both the worlds.

Inmate Spotlight



Anthony G. is a current inmate from South Carolina. Currently serving a 35 year sentence, he will be eligible for release in 2026. He accepted Islam while in prison and took on a different name to reflect his embrace of a new path, Sulaiman.

Hailing from South Carolina, Sulaiman credits his mother for doing her best to ensure the importance of education and discipline–two things which have played a key role in his acceptance of Islam.

Sulaiman primarily grew up in a single parent home in Greenville. While his mother was his caregiver, Sulaiman was able to meet his father after his period of incarceration ended when Sulaiman was seven years old. Unfortunately, Sulaiman relates how his father was tragically killed within a year of his release. It is true that most often, the God-conscious and lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) face many trials and tribulations on their journey to God in this world. For Sulaiman, his difficulties began early in life. They would lay the foundation for what was to come.

It was around the time of his father's murder that Sulaiman started commiting crime. It wasn't long before he was cuffed for the first time at nine years old. Thereafter, his behavior worsened landing him several stints in the Department of Juvenile Justice–a place where Sulaiman learned how to commit crimes of greater magnitude and violence. "By the age of 20, I'd done almost everything besides take a life, by the grace of God," Sulaiman said. It was then that his time in the outside world was up–at the age of 20, Sulaiman was sentenced to 35 years for armed robbery and breaking into a motor vehicle.

In his own words, Sulaiman said: "after over a decade of rebelliousness and disregard for rules and prison policies, at 30 years old I started to deeply reflect on life, my failures compared to my achievements, my past, present, and future. Searching for answers and trying to understand the meaning of 'purpose' and identify mine, I started to call on Allah in the only way I knew how, which was down on my knees at the foot of [the] bed on some nights and mornings."

Through a brother in prison, Sulaiman explains how in-depth reading on a comparative study of the history relating

to Islam caused him to "gravitate toward true Islam with an enthusiasm unsurpassed by anything prior to or afterwards." It was June 24th, 2008 when Sulaiman embraced Islam with a sound belief in the Oneness of Allah, the Prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), the leadership of the 12 Imāms (ʿa), and life after death.

Sulaiman's journey highlights the beauty of God. To be raised in a struggling single parent household, to lose a father in tragedy after reunification, to turn to violence, and ultimately to find everlasting forgiveness, love, and truth, is nothing short of the mercy of God. Sulaiman's story is one of hope and inspiration that follows difficulty and loss. Life will always have challenges but with God, they become bearable.

"Whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make for him a way out [of the adversities of the world and the Hereafter] and provide for him from whence he does not count upon. And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him." (Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṭ-Ṭalāq (65), Verses 2-3)

For struggling youth, Sulaiman advises them to embrace and normalize being smart and informed, understanding that education [coupled with faith] is the vehicle that will take them wherever they want to go in life. Since learning through research about the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), Sulaiman said his life has changed tremendously. It is with the skill of discipline and value in education that his mother instilled in him that have helped pave the way for acceptance of this path.

"My ability to resort to the Qurʾān and sayings of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) to approach matters and solve problems have greatly enhanced my discernment. Being certain about Allah's existence and the Prophethood of Rasūlullāh (ṣ) has fortified my confidence as a man [of] correct guidance."

Sulaiman's sentence will come to a close in October 2026; by then he will have served approximately 29 years of a 35 year sentence. He prays to continue to live his life in the way of Islam post release. We pray for his success and his spiritual and personal growth.

"I advise others facing adversity or having feelings of despair that all hope is not lost and that at any time, they can make the conscious decision accompanied by the practical methods to change the course of their life and that the best course is one that is pleasing to Allah," Sulaiman said.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (a) and the Meaning of Sacrifice

By Taymaz Tabrizi

"...and I only created jinns and humans to serve Me."

Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah adh-Dhāriyāt (51), Verse 56

In a seemingly odd dream, Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) saw that he was to sacrifice his first-born son Ismāʿīl (Ishmael). He was a bit perplexed by the dreams, and thought that perhaps they were insinuations of the Devil? Prophet Ibrāhīm beseeched Allah for clarification, thus he was visited by another series of dreams repeating the same command of Allah. The Prophet knew what he had to do.

As difficult as it is to sacrifice one's child, Prophet Ibrāhīm's circumstances made the task much more emotionally taxing. He had wished to have a child for decades, but to no avail. He had wanted righteous descendants to succeed his mission in spreading the message of Divine purpose and salvation to the world for generations to come, and to counter the purposelessness, despair, and existential meaninglessness that the Enemy - namely the Devil - seeks so eagerly to establish as facts for all of humankind.

But bearing a child has an emotional component as well. When Allah created human beings, He deeply ingrained within them the natural need to have children. Children bring about joy, emotional and spiritual fulfillment in life. Prophet Ibrāhīm had already reached old age without having a child, but after decades of trying and through the grace of the Almighty, he was given a son through Lady Hājar (Hagar) whom they called Ismāʾīl. Ismāʿīl not only made Prophet Ibrāhīm's prayers for the salvation of humanity come true, but he also brought him indescribable joy.

Right after Ismāʿīl was born, Allah commanded Prophet Ibrāhīm to take his son and Hājar to the desert in Mecca, and leave them there alone so that they would help establish - through the protection, guidance, and grace of Allah - the earthly axis of worship on this Earth: the Kaʿbah, and the pilgrimage rituals that accompany it. It was only after a long and arduous separation - one which pained Prophet Ibrāhīm

greatly, and made him collapse on his knees in tears praying to the All-Merciful Creator - that Ismāʿīl was reunited with his father. Though this was a very difficult test for him, he accepted Allah's decisions over his life.

When Ibrāhīm was asked to sacrifice his one and only son, it was no easy feat. Decades of waiting for a son and a heart-breaking separation - only for it to end in an early death through sacrifice - was a herculean task that would have broken any regular person. But through a lifetime of suffering and trials, Prophet Ibrāhīm had learned to attach himself only to Allah - the true permanent reality in life.

Prophet Ibrāhīm did not directly relay the command to his son. He asked him: "O my son! I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. So what do you think?" He (Ismāʿīl) replied: "O my father! Do what you are commanded; you will find me, if Allah wills, bearing it patiently.' (Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt (37), verse 102)

Even in this extremely difficult situation, Prophet Ibrāhīm did not spew commands or 'put his foot down' with his son. He spoke to him respectfully and asked him what his thoughts were, and let him come to him through his own choice. This is a sign for humankind that even in hard times and difficulties, we must speak gently and kindly to other people, especially our children.

According to Muslim narrations, Shayṭān (Satan) tried to convince Prophet Ibrāhīm not to sacrifice his son by giving him moral arguments against it, but the Prophet paid no heed to him. At the request of Ismāʿīl, Prophet Ibrāhīm covered his son's head. As he brought the blade down, Prophet Ibrāhīm turned away and began to move the knife. But at that moment, the archangel Jibrāʾīl (Gabriel) prevented the knife from cutting. Even after several attempts, the cutting failed. According to a tradition (ḥadīth), Prophet Ibrāhīm wondered why the knife was not doing what he was willing to do. A voice then came to him informing him that though he willed the knife to sacrifice his son, the All-Mighty prevented the knife from cutting his son's throat. Angel Jibrāʾīl revealed to the Prophet that he had fulfilled Allah's will, and no longer needed to continue. As a 'friend of Allah' Ibrāhīm had obeyed his Lord, but Allah's will ultimately prevailed, and a ram was then sent down from heaven to be sacrificed instead of Ismāʿīl.

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Eid al-Aḍḥā is an official holiday in Islam, which is celebrated on the tenth day of the lunar month, Dhul Ḥijjah, when Muslims remember Prophet Ibrāhīm's readiness to sacrifice his greatest attachment. This willingness embodied his ultimate submission to the will and command of Almighty Allah. Muslims celebrate this holiday in the last month of the Islamic lunar calendar by performing special prayers and certain rituals.

The story of Prophet Ibrāhīm's sacrifice is embedded with multiple reminders for Muslims today. One of the words for sin in Arabic is khaṭāʾ. It is an ancient archery term, which means to 'miss the mark' implying that with some actions, we miss the mark and purpose of our existence, namely salvation and deliverance in Allah through obedience and attachment to Him. This is the meaning behind the Muslim credal statement that: 'There is no deity except Allah who is worthy of worship.' It means that our hearts should only be attached to Allah, as anything else will only lead to disappointment. When we sin and miss the mark, we may eventually lose our way (ṣirāṭ) completely if we do not adjust ourselves and turn back in repentance. When we lose our way, we lose our true purpose and meaning in life, and could potentially head towards a life of wastefulness, which would be a complete loss for us in this world and the next.

The story of Prophet Ibrāhīm tells us that staying on the Divine and Godly path requires sacrifice. It not only requires us to let go of our attachment to sin, but also other emotional attachments which may distract us from the true purpose of life - which is to submit entirely to Our Creator and Nourisher. Reorienting ourselves, and living a life of transcendent and true purpose and meaning in life thus requires effort, vigilance, and sacrifice; and sometimes that sacrifice may come in the form of that which we are most attached to in this life, even if they are not sinful in and of themselves. Letting go of our strongest attachments spiritually, at least in favor of Allah, can sometimes be the ticket to permanent and real tranquility; whereas staying attached to certain things can be a recipe for unhappiness and despair - marked by a rollercoaster of highs and lows in life. This does not mean that we should stop caring or valuing what we have in life; rather it is a reminder that in the end, everything is temporary and can be taken away from us, but only Allah All-Mighty is Permanent and Everlasting. Enduring attachment and true happiness solely exists with Allah. Understanding and establishing this idea deep in our hearts will make us suffer less, and will help us find real tranquility even if everything else is seemingly taken away from us in transient life.

A Temporary Test

By Shaykh Mateen Charbonneau

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللهِ وَكِيلًا

"And put your trust in Allah, Sufficient is Allah as a Guardian."
(Noble Qur'ān, al-Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33), Verse 3)

What type of attitude should we have as believers while we traverse this life? As we must put our trust in Allah and rely on Him, does this mean that we do not prepare ourselves for things that come our way? Absolutely not. We must do as the famous tradition of the Noble Prophet (ṣ)[1] goes: Trust in Allah but tie your camel. This means we should always place our trust in Allah, but at the same time we should also do what is within our capability. We should always ask Allah to help us and implore Him through the beautiful supplications that we have while at the same time taking steps to ensure our success through His help.

When we get sick, do we expect our supplications to heal us while refusing to get treatment from the experts in the medical field? No, rather we go seek their help and advice. However, we know that the ultimate result of healing is with Allah so we ask for His aid and while doing what we can. As for what is out of our control, we pray to Allah to help us and we put our trust in Him in all matters.

Whatever comes our way we should embrace it and say: alḥamdulillāh ʿalā kulli ḥāl (praise be to Allah in all situations). We must know and understand that trials are a part of this life. We will have good times as well as bad. We hope and pray for the best, yet prepare ourselves for the worst.

1 *Anas ibn Mālik reported: A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allah?" The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Tie her and trust in Allah." [Sunan at-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth #2517]*

"Do the people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe' and they will not be tested?" ((Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt (29), Verse 2)

This world is full of problems, but we must expect them and learn to cope with them.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) said: *"I swear by God that the speed with which poverty and calamities rush toward our friends is more than the running speed of the zebra, the speed of the flood and the rainfall. If you are not suffering this way, then we know that you are not one of us. Your orphans will be helped by us, your debts will be repaid by us, and your sins will be forgiven by us (through intercession).[2]"*

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.' Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are [rightly] guided."
(Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Baqarah (2), Verses 155-157)

We see that if we patiently persevere through these trials then our reward is with Allah.

We know that life is a test and that we will surely be tested with the things of this world. We know this life is passing and ultimately we will return to Allah. When we realize the magnitude of this verse of the Noble Qurʾān, *"Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return,"* then we will understand that the ultimate goal is the hereafter and other things will seem less significant. Death is inevitable for us, and we are all working towards returning to Allah whether we want to or not. Once we accept this fact then things will begin to fall into perspective and we start doing our actions with the aim of working for Allah's pleasure and building our hereafter, instead of just wasting our time aimlessly.

I have been through many trials in my life as I am sure a lot of you have. The main thing that should help us cope with these trials of life is knowing that Allah is a witness of everything in existence. That ultimately, we will be brought back to Him and rewarded for the things we have endured patiently. Also, we know that our Imām is a witness, as Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj) told Shaykh al-Mufīd in a letter: *"We are aware of your circumstances and nothing of your affairs is concealed from us."*[3]

We should not waste our blessings and allow our rewards to spoil by complaining when misfortunes hit us. We need to be grateful to Allah in times of hardship as well as ease.

We should not allow things to bother us too much or allow setbacks in life to shake our faith. We must adapt and learn to cope with whatever situation comes our way, while at the same time maintaining and upholding the principles of our faith. We see that Prophet Yūsuf (ʿa) was imprisoned, as well as several of our Imāms (ʿa). Did this get them discouraged so that they gave up on their prayers? Never! The jailors would all say that they would hear the humming of worship from their prison cells.

We have to have a positive outlook about things. Look at Imām al-Kāẓim (ʿa) who was thrown in the dungeons. Most people would say: *"Oh! My life is over! What is left for me?!"*

Now what did Imām al-Kāẓim (ʿa) say during this trial? Did he complain and give up his conviction in Allah? Never! He said now he has more time to worship and pray to Allah.

Look at this pandemic we faced and are still facing - they ordered all places of worship to be shut down. Then the month of Ramaḍān came. Did we give up and say, "Ok, well, Ramaḍān is canceled this year?" No, we found a way to make it happen. We adapted to the situation and still held programs online. Even in times of fear, we see that Allah told Prophet Mūsā and Harūn (ʿa) to turn their houses into places of worship.

"We inspired Moses and his brother with this Message: 'Provide dwellings for your people in Egypt, make your dwellings into places of worship, and establish regular prayers: and give glad tidings to those who believe!'" (Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah Yūnus (10), Verse 87)

We must always be progressing and moving forward in our lives and not let things hold us down.

The Noble Prophet (ṣ) said: *"He whose two days are the same is at loss."*[4]

So, no matter what is going on around us or what storm of troubles we are facing, we must always be improving ourselves and stay focused on our goal of achieving our purpose in life,

2 *Mishkāt al-Anwār Fī Ghurar al-Akhbār, by Al-Ṭabarsī, Ḥadīth #1709*

3 *Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 53, P. 175*

4 *Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 71, P. 173*

which is to worship Allah and attain His pleasure. When times are dark, we look for Miṣbāḥ al-Hudā (the Lantern of Guidance). When we find ourselves in the sea of troubles with problems crashing down on us like waves, we look for Safīnah an-Najāh (the Ark of Salvation) which is the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) to show us the way.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good." (Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt (29), Verse 69)

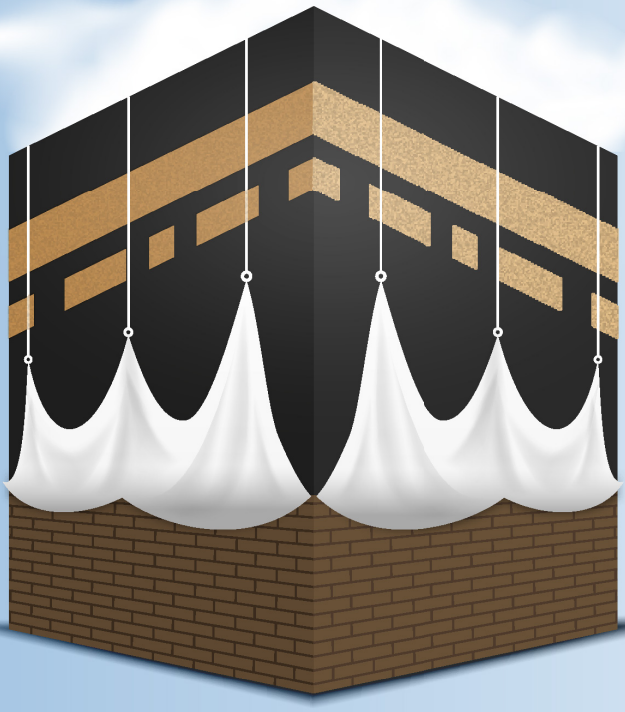
We should never become stagnant in our striving for Allah's sake. What happens to water when it sits too long and becomes stagnant? It becomes something that no one can use and no one wants, it is no longer beneficial. However, water that is flowing is something that is beneficial. We need to be benefitting ourselves by taking advantage of the time Allah has given us to gain His pleasure, we need to benefit ourselves, our families, and then our society.

God-willing, we know that we are working towards something great. We are working for our hereafter. Let nothing get in the way of that! Any obstacle that comes our way, we ask Allah for His help and we make our intentions to do our best to continue on in the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

We must condition ourselves to stay firm on the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) no matter what comes at us in this life. We must gain confidence in ourselves so that even if we were the only Muslims in our area, we would still diligently uphold the teachings of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and his Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa).

This conviction and determination to keep pushing forward through trials and tribulations is something that we can all achieve, but it takes struggle. We ask Allah to enable us with the tawfīq (Divine providence) to become true followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and supporters of our awaited Imām, Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj). We ask Allah to help us cope with whatever we face in life and that He always helps us. We ask Allah to help us move forward making progress in submission to Him.

EID AL ADḤĀ MUBĀRAK



THE WORLDLY LIFE FOR THE EVERLASTING

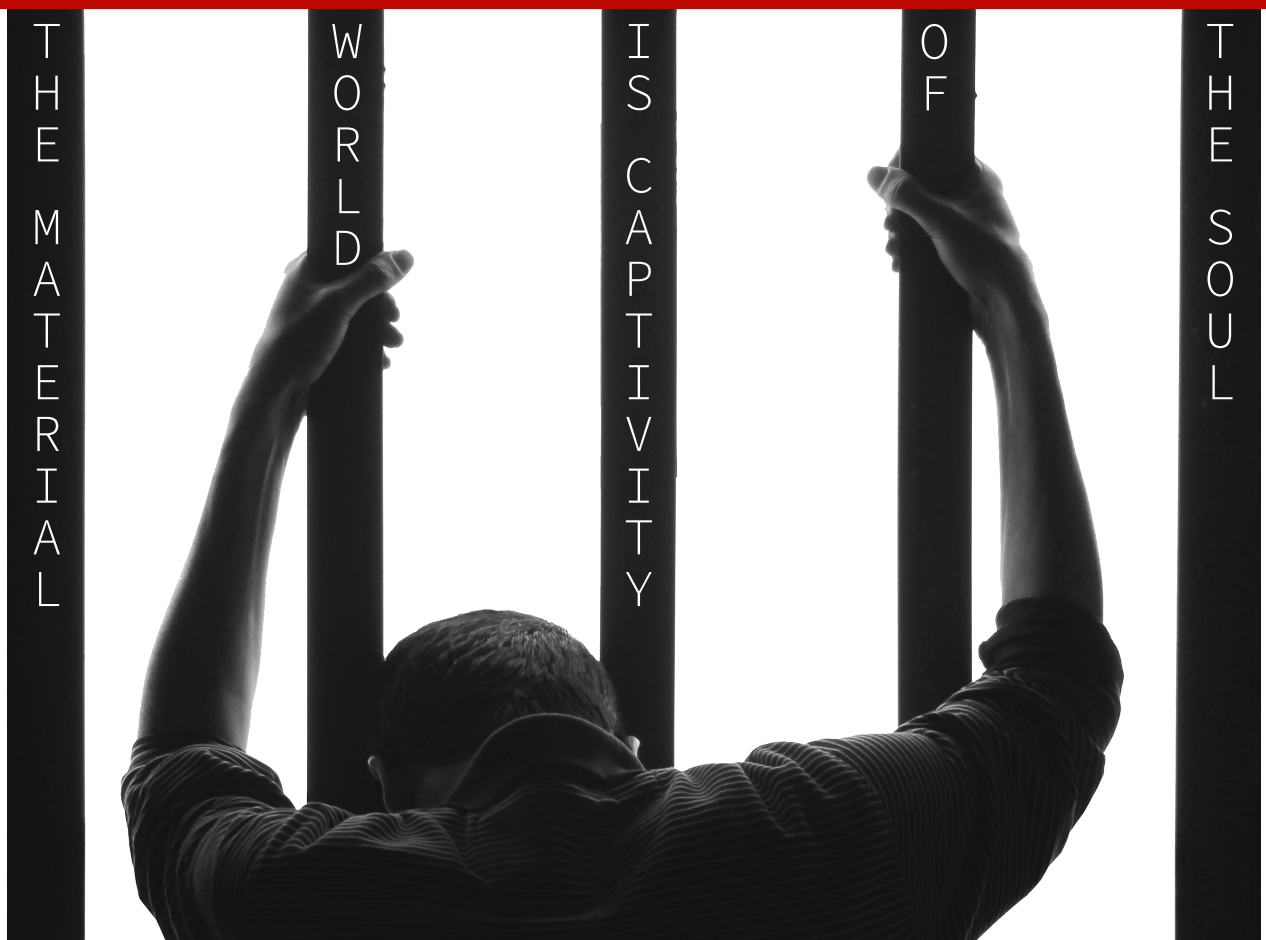
By Sayyid Muzammil Zaidi

"At the moment when the coffin of a person is being lifted and carried, the concerned soul follows its corpse and regretfully calls: 'O you, my children and my relatives! Beware that the world does not cheat you as it did me. I gathered wealth regardless of it being lawful or unlawful and left all of it for others. Now I am left with its burden upon me while they enjoy the fruit of it; therefore, avoid that which is similar to what happened to me.'"[1]

This narration by the Noble Prophet (ṣ) of Islam encapsulates the relationship of the common person with the dunyā (this world). The dunyā is one of the two realms of existence created by the All-Mighty Allah for humankind, the other being the ākhirah (afterlife). The dunyā is the temporary abode that is limited in its capacity and duration. It is merely a test for us, our actions here will determine our fate in the ākhirah.

Some of the verses of Noble Qurʾān and traditions of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) talk about the dunyā in a negative tone. It is described as deceptive, disloyal, a source of evil and a pastime. On the other hand the ākhirah is permanent and truly alive. With this understanding in mind, one might

1 *Biḥār al-Anwār, Vol. 6, P. 161*



question why Allah has made the love for dunyā a part of human nature if it is such a detested act, as it is against His attributes to create something detestable? Aspiring to live comfortably in the dunyā is not wrong. In fact, it is encouraged in Islam to excel in this life. The issue arises when one begins to see this as their life's goal, and in doing so forgets the true goal of building their ākhirah. One must strive to simply live in the dunyā, not for the dunyā. With its many deceptive traits, the dunyā makes this a difficult goal to achieve. However, Allah has blessed us with immaculate examples of how to achieve this fine balance. One of the most timeless and universal examples is that of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his mission in Karbalā'.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) taught us that the best manner in which one can live in this dunyā is as a free person–someone who is not enslaved by their low desires. A person can become wealthy or famous but the greatest value is in one who is free to make their own decisions. When one becomes attached to this dunyā, this freedom is taken away from them. When addressing the enemies at Karbalā', Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) said: *"If you don't believe in any religion and don't fear the Resurrection Day, at least be free in this world.[2]"* We see multiple examples of this in Karbalā', one being that of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd. He recognized the truth and recognised the personality of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), but he was enslaved by his desire of capturing the governorship of Rey which was promised upon Imām Ḥusayn's defeat. This restricted his ability to stand with truth. He was a prisoner of the material world, but did not realize it because he did not have confidence in the existence of the afterlife. If he did, he would have disregarded this world's offerings as he would have known that the afterlife has much more to offer. When a prisoner enters prison, he knows of the world that exists outside. Therefore, his aim is to leave the prison and go into the outside world. Whereas, if a prisoner was born in prison and never knew of the

2 *Biḥār al-Anwār, Vol. 45, P. 51*

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) said, "If you don't believe in any religion and don't fear the Resurrection Day, at least be free in this world.[1]"

outside world, that person would prefer to stay in prison, as this is something familiar. In this way, if one doesn't have a strong faith in the promises of the next world, they will prefer to dwell here. We see this in the example of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd: he had more belief in the materialistic promises of this world (e.g. governorship of Rey), as compared to his belief in the consequences he could face in the Hereafter for his actions.

This is where we are blessed with the presence of the immaculate infallibles. They are individuals that have been given an insight into the next world by Allah. Throughout the events of Karbalā', Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) constantly tried to show people this insight. He tried to break the chains of deceit tied around them by talking to them about death and its imminent coming. He taught people that in order to be free, one must not allow this world and its limited offerings to rule and overpower one's mind, body and soul. Rather, they should constantly remember that their soul's ultimate abode is in the everlasting Hereafter with Allah.

Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) showed us how to be a source of light and hope for others, despite living in a dark world. The world that Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) lived in was one that was void of the teachings that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) had implemented. But despite him being disappointed in the dwellers of this dunyā and the oppression they had carried out on their souls and the dīn (religion), Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) stayed true to the traditions of the Noble Prophet (ṣ). He remained an ark of salvation for the people. Up until his last breath he called people to the truth, and showed them that the doors were still open for forgiveness. Whether it was his call to ʿUmar ibn Saʿd: *"O Ibn Saʿd! Are you really fighting me?! Don't you fear Allah to Whom you shall return?! I am the son of you know very well who. Why don't you come to my side and leave these folks, for that will surely be better for you with Allah?"*[3] Or whether it was the respectful manner in which he accepted Ḥaḍrat Ḥurr (ʿa) with open arms despite his previous wrongdoings by saying: "Welcome! You are at liberty in this world as well as the Hereafter."[4]

Like Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) we are also living in a corrupted world. A world of war, oppression, corruption, deceit, etc. We need to take inspiration from him and through our sīrah (way of life) be a source of guidance and love for fellow dwellers of this earth. We cannot be simply disappointed with the state of the world and give up all hopes of a better world. We need to show others that as lovers of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) we are compassionate and forgiving human beings. Our constant aim should be to bring our fellow human beings to a point where the ẓuhūr [reappearance of Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj)] can happen.

Thirdly, Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) shows us that one should use religion as a companion to navigate this world and reach lofty positions in the next life. It is through strong faith and true love of Allah that we can flourish in this test of dunyā. Allah has constructed this religion to aid us, but we unfortunately see it as a burden. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) accurately states: *"People are the slaves of this world, and religion is on their tongues; they abide by it as long as their livelihoods are granted; when they are tested with afflictions, religious people become rare."* [5] Even if we just focus on the love our Lord has for us as a great component of religion, then this can aid us in many hardships of life. If we always believe that Allah's love is so great, that He can never want anything bad for us, then many hardships in life can become tolerable. We need to believe that whatever is happening in our life is happening by the will of Allah, and He truly loves his beings. When one reaches this stage of true Tawḥīd (belief in the Oneness of Allah), this world and its tests start to become inconsequential. With this love, we are motivated to successfully navigate the trials before us in order to unlock the rewards of the Hereafter. The ultimate goal is to pass through the tests of this dunyā with flying colors so that we are rewarded by (or with) meeting our Lord in the next life in a state that He is pleased with us.

We see this agitation in the lives of many of the martyrs of Karbalā' and the martyrs of today. On the night of ʿĀshūrā', when Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) told his companions that he would guarantee a place for them in Jannah (Paradise) even if they left, they refused to leave. For the companions it wasn't just about gaining Jannah, it was about completing the tests of this world in such a way that they could enter the next life with pride and belief that they had truly submitted to their Lord's desires. These martyrs used their love of Allah to aid them in passing the test they were presented with in Karbalā', while others like ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and Shimr put religion aside during this test and failed miserably.

The life and teachings of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) are shining examples of how one can navigate this dunyā. Whether it's the teachings of how one must keep their soul free in this world and not enslaved to this dunyā, being a beacon of hope in an immoral world or how religion should be used to navigate the tests of this world and please our Lord. Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his stance in Karbalā' offer these gems of knowledge for us to benefit from. While this world is a place of deceit and tribulations, the personalities of the immaculate infallibles are truly sources of mercy and guidance for us.

3 Maqtal al-ʿAwālim, , by Abdullah Nur-Allah al-Bahrani, P. 78

4 Nafas ul-Mahmūm, by Shaykh Abbas Qummi, P. 192

5 Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl, P. 245

Words Search

Can you find all the words that describe the noble characteristics of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa)

H L G G N A P E G F I G I Q Z L I W P I E S A X Q O E X V J
G T M X F H U L A Y O S G P F F E Y P D U R K X O N Z D G Y
W B B V S L K U H X H R G K E V C L M A Y V K R Q I R Y P Y
X W H D L L M V B D X Q B O Y R B V R M T K D F C T J U P V
I T S U N L X E M F C C I E O L S Q H F I I K U O U L F M H
C V D W M K R L X S Q S F M A D W E H O P E E M X Y M L A N
G Q G A Q I Q E A A N O A P L R W I V C G J H N J H K B H F
T B E Q F V L A S B R O T C P P A I X E W Z H F C L F M N M
Q R B J R S V I J P F J D L R Z Z N L S R N F F G E M U U C
I A D W G F D H T I O Z R C E I W Q C L T A H J T B B S C E
D V J L E L E X N Y E N Z L Q H F J U E J W N P B V T L A T
C E P P K A V Z R O B L S Z W D T I K B X G P C J T H A C M
W R K U Y S O T W Y B F O I H M Z Z C L A Z N U E J O X B T
I Y Y R N U T J O T V I S V B Q Q L P E R L P H S N R Y W V
S A Y E F S I R H O W L L G E I G M W R S W K P J A P F Q S
U Y M Z B X O U B D X Z P I E X L Z Q C X A S I U X X H P O
N K V E S S N N C Y G A N Q T N Z I I V M J Q E K Y O L G M
J X M P E J W A D B N S X Q R Y E X T H N X U T P A P J I H
L V V X L N U G K A Y C F K L B L R O Y K J A Y P A Z Y M D
Y I F L F N A N D I D I X K S N D F O L C Z I A U H K J N E
Y Q Z I L W L H N X N W I S E U L O K S T Z I R X T X C O S
U G L K E P D G A M K D U A G G B R C V I E X D U T E P K O
V C Z X S P X H U A C L N H T V J G L I W T F O Z J U X X C
J L L V S N D M M P Q V M E V Z E I I W Q Q Y G P X O I D Q
Y B F G N L T F N K V G F Z S J P V Y B B N H O D G G X O W
E K C H E X X F Z D U B J B R S T E H F K O A W V G L X Z X
X C X K S S D V C H J T K Y M U F N A C O E W T Q U G L N F
R Q S L S P X B Q Y T R R Q L Q I E P A B E L F X C G D F C
E C Y N J H I I W L W K R T E U A S G I A L M N B S G H K M
A X Y N C D M X E T C O U R A G E S Y X Q X W Q L Z D M N H

sacrifice
perseverance
courage
bravery
responsibility
patience
nobility
generosity
kindness
forgiveness
love
forbearance
selflessness
piety
devotion
hope
humility
goodwill
wise
pure

Brain Teasers

1. The more of this there is, the less you see. What is it?
2. What can be stolen, mistaken, or altered, yet never leaves you your entire life?
3. Turn me on my side and I am everything. Cut me in half and I am nothing. What am I?
4. Until I am measured, I am not known. Yet you miss me, when I have flown. What am I?
5. Which creature walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?
6. If you drop me I'm sure to crack, but give me a smile and I'll always smile back. What am I?
7. There is a word in the English language in which the first two letters signify a male, the first three letters signify a female, the first four signify a great man, and the whole word, a great woman. What is the word?
8. Some try to hide from me, or even cheat, but time is on my side. Try as you might, you can never escape, I will claim my booty in the end. Who am I?

1. Darkness, 2. your identity, 3. The number eight, 4. Time, 5. Man: he crawls as a baby, Walks as an adult and uses a cane as a senior, 6. A Mirror, 7. Heroine, 8. Death

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Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaff (61), Verse 1

Transliteration Guide

Arabic terms in this booklet have been transliterated according to the following guidelines:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)	ظ	ẓ
ء	’ (medial or final form)	ع	ʿ
ا	a	غ	gh
ب	b	ف	f
ت	t	ق	q
ث	th	ك	k
ج	j	ل	l
ح	ḥ	م	m
خ	j	ن	n
د	d	ه	h
ذ	dh	و	w
ر	r	ي	y
ز	z	ة	h (without iḍāfah)
س	s	ة	t (with iḍāfah)
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ	ـَـ	a
ض	ḍ	ـِـ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُـ	u

Glossary

Akhlāq: Islamic morals and ethics

Barakah: Blessing

Dīn: Religion

Duʿā: Supplication; a deep connection and communication between an individual and their Creator

Fiṭrah: innate nature of consciousness of their Creator and goodness that all human beings are created with

Ḥajj: A pilgrimage to Mecca that is obligatory in the 12th Islamic month, on every Muslims once in their lifetime if certain conditions are met. Ḥajj is one of the main branches of Islam.

Next Issue

Creator's Mercy

Visiting Medina

Orphan to Prophet